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STUDIES IN IBSEN

I

THE POETIC THEMES IN IBSEN'S *I BILLEDGALLERIET*

In the spring of 1852 Ibsen, then at the age of twenty-four, was sent abroad by the governing board of the Bergen theatre to acquaint himself with the administration and dramatic ideals of foreign theatres in order that he might the better qualify himself to perform the duties of the position of poet-manager upon which he had entered the preceding year. The theatres selected for special study were those of Copenhagen and Dresden. Important though this journey was for educating his dramatic sense, another phase of it concerns us here. This was the first journey to take him out of the poverty and cold and petty isolation of the North and to spread before him the manifold richness of that larger world of which he was destined to be a citizen from 1864 to 1891. In his early career, and indeed as late as 1860, Ibsen had devoted considerable attention to the practice of painting; indeed, when his literary productions failed to obtain a full measure of success, he may have felt that it was for a painter that fate had ordained him. Accordingly when he stepped into the Dresden gallery, its glories burst upon him in all their uplifting solemnity and power; for he brought to their appreciation the eye of a painter as well as of a poet, and a soul whose hunger after beauty had never been satisfied. His poetic cycle *I Billedgalleriet*, written as a result of these visits, has a far-reaching interest both in itself and because of the separate poems later built upon its themes, and supported by passages from his other writings it furnishes a most illuminating record of his mental moods and transitions up to the time of the publication of his *Digte* in 1871.

In as much as the text of the cycle is not readily accessible to American readers, Ibsen's publishers, the Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, of Copenhagen, have generously given their permission for reprinting it in full in these *Publications*.

I BILLEDGALLERIET

I

Der bor en hæslig svartalf i mit bryst,
som stundom gæster mig i onde timer,
i ensomhed, som midt i livets lyst—
når vågende jeg drømmer eller rimer.

Og når den hvisker, om end nok så tyst,
det er mig som en dødningklokke kimer,—
som havde mig en gravkold læbe kyst,—
thi efter svartalf-skik den hel sublim er:

"Begriber du ej selv," den hvisker fult,—
"hvor den er indholdsløs, den hele færden;
at du har tabt din tro på Gud og verden?

Og kan du ej forstå, dit bryst er hult,
dit ideal en lygtmand i det fjerne,
dit mål et stjerneskud—og ej en stjerne!"

II

"Dit indre er som bakkehældets bæk,
hvor kiselstenen ligger tør på bunden
fordi den sidste bølge alt er runden,
mens al din sangerkraft med den er væk.

Og når du tror at nynne gennem lunden,
så er det ej din bølge mild og kæk
(den havde blomsten lyttet til med skræk
og dog med længsel, af den klang omvunden).

Nej, det er kun de tørre vindfaldsgrene,
som efterårets blæst har hvirvlet ned
i elvelejet mellem golde stene,—

og når den friske strøm med jubel risler,
og du vanvittigt tror at synge med,—
da er det kun det brune løv, som hvisler."

III

"Og bild for alting ej dig ind at flommen
i høst og vår forandrer din natur;
du blir jo ligefuldt en stenet ur,
når din normale tid igen er kommen!—

Ak, skal du vente på begejstrings-trommen,
for kækt at storme mod dit fængsels mur,
da er det bedre at du bliver stur,
og kun spagfærdigt knytter hånd i lommen!—

Taus svømmer svanen til den dør,—men klangfuld
blir stemmen når den skal sin sjæl udånde;
ak ja, hvad mægter ikke dødsens vånde!

Men vil du derfor kalde den en sangfugl?
Vid, livsforliset satte den i flamme,
og husk, en rus formår hos dig det samme!"

IV

Jeg stod en morgenstund i galleriet
og drak begejstring af den rige kilde,
som kunstens høje fædre havde viet
til uforkrænkligt liv med hænder milde.

Hvor er ej sjælen let og sindet stille!
Det er som alle storme havde tiet,
det er som alle bølger havde biet
i deres flugt, og blidt mod stranden trille!

Hvad er hin stilhed vel i kirkens haller
hvor menigheden triner ind, andægtig
som det sig hør og bør i herrens tempel,

mod denne stilhed, der som duggen falder
på sindet her, hvor ånden har sin stempel
sat på hver tavle evigstærk og mægtig.

V

Hvad er det, som beruser mig så mægtigt
imellem disse evighedens værker?
Er det de store navne, jeg bemærker,—
hvad heller farvespillet mildt og prægtigt?

Nej, hvad mig griber kernefuldt og vægtigt
er tanken, at min sjæl endnu så stærk er,
at den har håb og tro trods alle klærker,—
en sats, som tidtnok klang mig selv fordægtigt.

Ja, her jeg føler, at i mig er Gud;
thi jeg formår at gribes og beruses
ved skønhedstanken, der er foldet ud.

Jeg skuer gudsidéen klar og plastisk;
se! derfor svulmer og min sjæl elastisk,
og tvivlens dæmon i mit indre knuses!

VI

Correggios "Nat" med dine helgenstråler,
hvor har du drysset dagglans i mit sind!
Jeg stirret har i dunkelheden ind
så dybt, som noget jordisk øje tåler.

Mig griber angsten på Marias kind,
mens hun sin fryd og ve i tanken måler,—
jeg deler Mohrens bøn, mens rige skåler
han rækker barnet af dets lyshav blind.

Og stjernen, som de fromme hyrder skimted,—
der peged did, hvor Frelseren var stegen
som menneske fra himlen ned til jorden,—

se, den har og for mig i "Natten" glimtet,
min frygt er kuet og min tvivl er vegen,
den skønne myte er til sandhed vorden!

VII

Og Rafaels "Sixtinske Jesu-moder"
med Frelserbarnet mellem sine hænder,
imedens himmelen sin hvælving spænder
om tusinder af milde engelho'der!—

Og så den trivelige Nederlænder,
som sidder veltilmode i sin bod, der
til overflod er fuld af døde ænder
og gæs og høns og andre verdens goder!

Den ene overskygger ej den anden:
violen kan jo dog med tulipanen
forliges nokså godt i en buket;

og tør da ikke jeg i en sonnet,
som anemonen med den gyldne iris,
forbinde Rafael med Jan van Mieris?—

VIII

Thi mindes skal du, at i kunstens rige,
der et det ene *formen*, som har rang;
hvis du vil dømme skaldens tonestige,
sa hør *hvorledes*, ikke *hvad* han sang.

Hvad kunstneren har *tænkt* vil intet sige,—
lad da idéen gå sin egen gang;
det hjalp kun lidt mod himmelen at hige,
hvis ej på stærke vinger du dig svang;

ja formen, formen kun i et og alt
formår at adle kunstneråndens foster
og stemple det som stort og genialt;

ja, formen hylder jeg hvad end det koster!
Begribeligt! thi tab det ej af sigte:
ved formen bliver mine vers til digte!

IX

Og hvorfor skal da vi poeter rave
med øllet hjerne om idéens bål,
og blindt afsted på versefødder trave
en hestelængde foran tankens mål?

Se, kunsten er jo dog en strudsemave,
der døjer alting, selv granit og stål,—
og du kan fodre den med grød og kål,
som med den gyldne frugt fra Edens have.

Og hvortil da de overstemte toner,
og denne sværmen-om i regioner,
hvor vingen brister og hvor stemmen svigter;

istedenfor at slå i jorden rod,
og skabe billeder med kød og blod
fra hverdagslivet, som stillebens-digter!

X

De stille morgentimer er tilende,
og jeg er vakt af mine drømmes dvale,—
thi broget bølger gennem alle sale
besøgende hvorhen jeg vil mig vende.

Og recensioner mine sanser blænde;
jeg føler mig som vårens første svale,
idet den atter gæster hjemmets dale,
men endnu ikke kan sin rede kende;

jeg skuer alting i Morgana-tåge;
nu kritiseres her fra alle kroge,
så det tilsidst mig sind og syn forvilder.

Hvad må dog ej et digterhjerte døje!
Ak, hvilken marter for et lyrisk øje,
når det skal skærpes ved kritikens briller!

XI

Og mellem klyngerne repræsentanter
af alslags kunstbegejstring er tilstede:
her en, som fægter i æstetisk hede,
fordi han selv har rang blandt dilettanter,

og der en anden, hvis begejstring skranter,
fordi den fostredes af livets lede,—
og derfor trænger til lidt lunken væde,
duggperlens surrogat for potteplanter.

Og hist en tredie med åbne øren,—
det ene ind-, det andet udgangsdøren
for hele skarens klingende kritik;

han lytter stille, med opmærksomt blik,
er ganske enig med dem allesammen,
og spør' tilsidst hvad prisen er—på rammen.

XII

Men i den indre sal, hvor dagen falder
med dæmpet lysning gennem vindvets bue,
hvor Spaniens høje mesterværker skue
zigeunerdunkle gennem seklers alder,—

der klinger ej det kritiske rabalder,
der brænder ene kunstnerdrømmens lue
så tyst som kærten, der til andagt kalder
ved korsets tegn i katolikens stue.

Thi for Murillos høje himmelfrue
der sidder tankefuld en kunstnerinde
i stum beskuen af sit fortidsminde;

og hendes sjæl sig svinger som en due,—
vi følger den på versets lette vinger,
lad se, om fredens oljeblad den bringer.

XIII

"Min barndoms Eden blev lukket og stængt,
og jeg stod udenfor gærdet;
min konfirmationsdragt på væggen hængt,—
ak, *det* var keruben med sværdet.

Og henover alle de smukke
blomster gik tidens plov og harv;
min sidste kæreste dukke
gik til mine søskend' i arv.

Min egen verden mig havde forstødt,
og foran mig lå en fremmed;
dens væsen tyktes mig hult og dødt,
jeg higed tilbage til hjemmet.

Jeg dukked mig ned som svalen
i drømmenes stille dyssende sø.
I vække mig ej af dvalen,—
deroppe måtte jeg dø!"

XIV

"Dengang jeg gik i skolen,
var mod nok i mit sind,
sålænge til aftensolen
var dalet bag fjeldets tind.

Men sænkte sig nattens skygge
henover ås og myr,
så kom de spøgelser stygge
fra ammens eventyr.

Og hvis jeg lukked øjet,
da drømte jeg såmangt,
og alt mit mod var fløjet—
Gud vide må hvorlangt!

Nu er der en forandring
med alting i mit sind;
nu går mit mod på vandring
ved morgensolens skin.

Nu er det dagens trolde,
nu er det livets larm,
som drysser alle de kolde
rædsler i min barm.

Men sidder jeg bag fligen
af nattens lune slør,
da vågner al min higen
så ørnedjerv som før.

Jeg trodser hav og flammer,
jeg sejler som falk i sky,
og glemmer angst og jammer—
til næste morgengry."

XV

"Det er mig for lummert i dalens dyb,
i stuen det er mig for trangt;
ak, havde jeg vinger, jeg fløj afsted,
jeg ved ikke selv hvorlangt!

Ak, havde jeg vinger, jeg fløj afsted—
der må jo dog gives en kyst
med lægende urter mod længselens gift
i dette urolige bryst.

Se, søsvalen stavner jo vidt over hav,
den finder sig dog tilsidst
en revne, hvortil dens mødige fod
kan klamres en stakket frist.

Jeg ved ikke selv, om til vest eller øst
jeg helst mig på vingerne svang;
jeg ved kun, at nuet knuger mit bryst
og stuen er mig for trang."

XVI

"Jeg stod i kunstens høje helligdom,
en åndig klarhed over blikket daler,
fra barmens dyb en røst forkynder som
Correggios fordum: 'Også jeg er maler!'

Da var min lod bestemt, min higen stillet,
og foran mig lå livet lyst og rigt;
det blev mit kald jo, hvert et sjælens billed
at klæde dejligt i et farvedigt.

En fredens ånd er i mit indre dalet;
nu fatter jeg tilfulde hvad jeg vil jo!
og i min kunstnerdrøm, som idealet,
står først og fremst "Madonna" af Murillo.

Som han i et begejstret øjeblik
til tavlen fængsled sine digtersyner,
så vil jeg, med den skaberhånd jeg fik,
i farver tolke hvad i ånden lyner!"

XVII

"Og der gik dage, og der gik år;—
til kunsten jeg drømte mig viet;
nu er min gøglende drøm forbi,—
på loftet står staffeliet.

Nu står jeg der atter som gudsforladt,
min livstråd er overklippet.
Og hvorfor? Fordi jeg uagtsomt greb
paletten for nøgleknippet.

Gud ved, der var billeder nok i min sjæl,
kunstnerinde var jeg i ånden;
der mangled mig blot en eneste ting,—
men det ene var—kunstnerhånden.—

Jeg ridser med blyant et vrag i storm
mellem rullende havsensvover;
ifald jeg var digter, jeg ridsed med pen
en lyrisk skitse derover.

Men midt i min armod der gives en trøst,
hvorved min fortvivlelse tier;
den trøst, der er redningsplanken for mig
og andre drømmegenier.

Erindringens trøst med al sin lyrik,
og ret til poetisk kvide;
smukt har jeg drømt og er grusomt vakt,
så har jeg vel krav til at lide.

Og derfor jeg sætter mig til og fra
og maler og drømmer og maler,
og lider og mindes og stirrer imod
mine gøglende idealer."

XVIII

Som kunstnerinden hist i billedsalen,
så har jeg også sværmet vildt og smukt,
og spilet digtervingerne til flugt,
og drømt en bane gennem skyportalen.

Ak, også jeg har fristet flugtens dalen;
de sidste vingeslag har kraften slukt,—
mit forårs fabelbog er læst og lukt,
nu har jeg tid at grunde på moralen.

Jeg vandrer i mit eget galleri,
hvor mine tavler står som himmeldronningen,
zigeunerdunkle, når forbi jeg kommer.

Og som af blomstens saft den travle bi
til kubens vinterforråd suger honningen,
så suger også jeg min livsvårs blommer.

XIX

Hvi har jeg aldrig følt min evnes knaphed,
når livets tamme ænder flagred om mig?
Hvor hul end deres snadren forekom mig,
begreb jeg dunkelt kun min egen slaphed.

Jeg havde drømt om ørnevingers raphed,
og mellem ænderne tilkort dog kom jeg,
og rendestenen tvang mig til en omvej,
såsnart kun livets gæs jeg fløj omkap med.

Har jeg måske en mere luftig sfære,
hvor mine kræfter strækker bedre til?—
Nej, min begejstring er en sæbeblære,

og poesiens fond et billedspil,
en håndful brikker, lemmer af figurer,
hvis sammenføjning over min natur er.

XX

Hvad gives vel i verden mere latterligt
end elegier over lyrisk nød,
og poesi som er i fødslen død,
og klynk, at hjertet kun på sorg og nat er rigt?

Tro mig, din sangmø handled mere datterligt,
ifald dig hun, lig Kimons datter, bød
det fulde bryst, hvor livets kilde flød,
og nærte dig anstændigt og forfatterligt.

Thi hvortil båder vel de glatte vers,
af rim omslyngede på kryds og tvers,
ifald på hule klager de forødes?

Ak, lad dem dø derinde hvor de fødes!
De er jo døgnets børn; og formens fagerhed
formår kun slet at dølge stoffets magerhed!

XXI

Sejl med forstand; thi digtersnekken krænger
ved mindste pust af livets ironi,
hvis ud dit nødsignal naivt du hænger,
og står ved roret uden energi.

Og frygt kun ikke for at klagen sprænger
dit bryst, om ej den vorder løst og fri;
det er jo karret kun med gæring i,
som for sin overflod til afløb trænger.

Men hvis den ædle druesaft er runden,
og karret ejer kun af vinens ild
den tørre bærme mugnende på bunden,

da kan du lukke den hermetisk til,
og lide på, at det sit indhold aver:
det sprænges ej, det falder kun i staver!

XXII

Min svartalf gæster mig ved dag og nat,—
dog ikke mer jeg ræddes ved dens komme;
naivitetens forår er jo omme,
og jeg begriber hvordan alt er fat.

Så tro som dragen under fjeldets tomme
forladte hvælving ruger på sin skat,
så freder alfen om den sidste blomme,
der står igen forvildet og forladt.

Og blommen er de ængstelige tanker,
der vugger sindet mellem frygt og håb,
og vækker tvivl og tro på kaldets dåb.

Den slynger sig omkring min golde sjæl,
så kærligt som de forårsfriske ranker
på Sydens vinbjerg om en rodløs pæl.

XXIII

I haven udenfor mit vindu stod
et æbletræ med blomsterfyldte grene;
der sang en liden fugl for mig alene
om livets herlighed og overflod.

Nu rådner blomsterne ved træets rod,
dets blade rasler mellem grus og stene;
en stormdag rev dem bort fra livets scene,
og forårssangeren sit ly forlod.

Nu har jeg høst forinden og foruden;
den blege rimblomst tegnet står på ruden,
jeg knuger isnende mod den min tinding.

Og hvad besidder jeg som savnets lindring?
et visnet mindeblad, en stump erindring;
det er det hele,—det er livets vinding!

DATE OF PUBLICATION AND COMPOSITION

I Billedgalleriet was first published in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, September 18 and 25, 1859. The cycle as a whole was not taken up into his *Digte*, but was published in the supplement volume of the *Folkeudgave*, Vol. X (1902), pp. 531-552.[1]

The cycle was written several years earlier than first published, and its composition probably does not fall outside of the years 1852 to 1855. A considerable portion of the cycle, notably the noble sonnets IV-VI and some of the following sonnets dealing directly with the atmosphere of the gallery were written either while he was still in Dresden or soon afterward—before his enthusiasm kindled by seeing the masterpieces had had time to cool. The intensely pessimistic sonnets XVIII-XXIII together with the transition to them furnished by the musings of the young woman who sat in the hall of the Spanish masterpieces copying Murillo's Madonna (XIII-XVII) presuppose an entirely different mood on the part of the poet and therefore a different, almost certainly a later, period of composition. The reason for not dating the last series of sonnets (XVIII-XXIII) after 1855 is that he became engaged to Susanna Thoresen early in 1856, and this put him into a more cheerful frame of mind.

FORM

In point of form the cycle divides itself into two parts:

1. I-XII and XVIII-XXIII, all of which are in sonnet form.[2] In all of these the poet speaks in his own person.

2. XIII-XVII, which are printed in four-line stanzas. In the different poems the length of the line varies, having from three to five metrical beats. In XIII, stanzas 1 and 3 are in a different meter from that of stanzas 2 and 4, and this suggests perhaps that this particular poem should be printed as two eight-line stanzas. In these poems Ibsen speaks through the young woman who sat copying Murillo's Madonna.

[1] A German version of the cycle (by Ludwig Fulda) is found in *Henrik Ibsens Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Brandes, Elias and Schlenther, Vol. I, pp. 257-271. Schlenther's discussion of it in his introduction to Vol. I, pp. XXVI-XXVIII is in some respects critically unsound.

[2] Ibsen elsewhere uses the sonnet form in

Vågner Skandinaver! (1849) *ES.* (=*Efterladte Skrifter*) I, pp. 31-37;
Prolog, (Oct. 5, 1853) *ES.* I, pp. 129-131;
Hilsen, (July 22, 1856) *ES.* I, pp. 137-139;

and (with shorter line)

Måneskinsstemning, (April 7, 1851) *ES.* I, p. 56.

I Billedgalleriet is unique among the works of Ibsen; not in form—for he uses the same form elsewhere—; not in the quality of its poetry—for both in strength and beauty his other productions at times surpass it—; but in the fertility of its poetic conceits and the variety of its poetic themes. And these themes are found in various stages of development in relation to his later poems: some in embryo, as that of *Stambogsrim*; others in a state of diffuseness, later to be gathered in and refined, as *Kløften*; and still others in all but their full-fledged form, as *Lysræd*. For the reading of this cycle and the study of the poems based upon it and bearing on it gives us a most intimate glimpse into that wonderful organism, the mind of Ibsen. It is as though he ushered us into the privacy of what he calls his own picture gallery, where his tablets stand peering forth dusk as gipsies when he passes by (XVIII, 3). We see him in the throes of anguish,

> der vugger sindet mellem frygt og håb,
> og vækker tvivl og tro på kaldets dåb (XXII, 3).

For until he gained his triumph with *Brand* in the spring of 1866, Ibsen was preëminently a poet who doubted his literary endowment, and it is in *I Billedgalleriet* that he has given this doubt its most violent expression.

The cycle begins—

> There dwells an ugly demon (hæslig svartalf) in my breast,
> that sometimes visits me in evil hours,
> in solitude as in the midst of life's delight—
> when wakefully I am dreaming or am rhyming.
>
> And when it whispers, though with bated breath,
> I seem to hear the bells of death a-tolling,—
> as though I had felt the grave's cold, clammy kiss.

The *svartalf* tells him that his ideal is the will-o'-the-wisp in the distance, a shooting-star and not a star; that his poetic fount is the gravel bed of a river run dry, that his attempt to hum in the forest sounds like the crackling of the dry underbrush, that when he essays to sing in harmony with the ripple of the fresh stream, it is but the brown leaves that are rustling; that he is no more a poet than the swan is a songbird (I-III). The words of the *svartalf* were

in a sense not new to Ibsen. They merely are a more concrete form of what he himself had expressed in the earliest of his poems, *Resignation* (1847) dating from his Grimstad days:

> Er de glimt fra sjælens dunkle,
> der igennem mulmet brød,
> og som lynblink monne funkle,
> kun til evig glemsel født?—
> Var forgæves al min higen,
> var min drøm kuns en fantom,
> er mig nægtet sjælens stigen,
> var min digten kold og tom?—
> Tier da I undertoner!—
> Kan jeg eder ej forstå,—
> lad mig iblandt millioner
> leve glemt og glemt forgå! . . . . . *ES.* I, p. 3.

In *Tvivl og Håb* (*ES.* I, pp. 6-7), a poem of the following year, a *dæmon* actually appears.

The feelings aroused in Ibsen by the immortal masterpieces in the gallery may fairly be characterized as being in the fullest sense religious, IV-VI; he felt that the demon of doubt was crushed and that God once more moved within him. The painting that impressed him most deeply was Correggio's *Night*, and Ibsen's description of it (see VI) is as fine as the painting.

His grouping of the "Sistine Madonna" with a still life picture by Jan van Mieris, VII, shows how far he fell short of appreciating Raphael, and recalls his words in the letter to Brandes of July 15, 1869 (*Breve* I, p. 190): "Rafaels kunst har egentlig aldrig varmet mig; hans skikkelser hører hjemme før syndefaldet; og overhovedet, sydboen har en anden æsthetik end vi; han vil det formelt skønne; for os kan selv det formelt uskønne være skønt ikraft af den iboende sandhed." With the latter part of the last quotation may be compared the realism that he espouses in IX, especially the second stanza:

> Se, kunsten er jo dog en strudsemave,
> der døjer alting, selv granit og stål,—
> og du kan fodre den med grød og kål,
> som med den gyldne frugt fra Edens have.

The rest of the cycle may be passed over lightly for the present, important though it is. In the holy silence of the hall of the Spanish masterpieces a woman sits painting Murillo's "Madonna."

She is represented as being overheard while pondering on her ambition to become a painter and lamenting her failure, XIII-XVII, especially XVII, 3:

> Gud ved, der var billeder nok i min sjæl,
> kunstnerinde var jeg i ånden;
> der mangled mig blot en eneste ting,—
> men det ene var—kunstnerhånden.—

The words of the woman painter form the transition to the concluding sonnets, XVIII-XXIII. Like her the poet bitterly laments his failure. He had aspired to the swiftness of the eagle's wings, and yet in the race he fell behind the ducks and geese (see XIX, 1 and 2). It is interesting to note here the words that Bergsøe, *Henrik Ibsen på Ischia*, p. 163, relates as having passed between himself and Ibsen in the summer of 1867:

B. "Men når din længsel efter Norge er så stærk, hvorfor drager du så ikke tilbage?"
I. "Tilbage! Tror du jeg vil lade mig træde ihjel af *gæs*?—"

In contrast with the end of XIX, where the poet despairingly says—

> Nej, min begejstring er en sæbeblære,
> og poesiens fond et billedspil,
> en håndfuld brikker, lemmer af figurer,
> hvis sammenføjning over min natur er.—

how confidently he writes in the first act of *Brand*—

> Men frem af disse sjælestumper,
> af disse åndens torsoklumper,
> af disse hoder, disse hænder,
> et helt skal gå, så Herren kender
> sin mand igen, sit største værk,
> sin ætling, Adam, ung og stærk!

In what is probably the most remarkable poem of the cycle, XXII, the *svartalf* reappears, but the poet has now become accustomed to his daily and nightly visits, and no longer is frightened by his coming.

The cycle ends with an almost unparalleled burst of pessimism—

> Nu har jeg høst forinden og foruden;
> den blege rimblomst tegnet står på ruden,
> jeg knuger isnende mod den min tinding.
>
> Og hvad besidder jeg som savnets lindring?
> Et visnet mindeblad, en stump erindring;
> det er det hele,—det er livets vinding!

It is practically certain that the mood of pessimism and gloom described in the concluding sonnets of *I Billedgalleriet* belonged to a period preceding his engagement and marriage to Susanna Thoresen, 1856-58, and that this was the "hjertestråle fra lysets hjem" that brought it to a close. In support of this view there may be quoted two stanzas from his metrical love letter addressed to her in January 1856 (*Breve* I, p. 68):

Du unge drømmende gåde,
turde jeg grunde dig ud,
turde jeg kækt dig kåre
til mine tankers brud,
turde jeg dukke mig ned i
dit rige åndige væld,
turde jeg skue tilbunds i
din blomstrende barnesjæl.

Da skulde fagre digte
svinge sig fra mit bryst,
da skulde frit jeg sejle
som fuglen mod skyens kyst.
Og alle de spredte syner
blev til en enhedens klang;
thi livets fagreste syner
spejled sig i min sang.

More significant is his poem addressed to her in March 1856, after they had actually become engaged (*ES.* I, p. 136), where he speaks of having dreamt that he was buried alive:

Men jeg lå alene dernede
i graven, levende død,
jeg bad, så brændende hede
derved mine tårer flød.

Så kasted jeg lønligt mit øje
til hende, den eneste, hen,
alt havde hun hørt og smilte
så barnligt til mig igen.

Da følte jeg mørket vige,
de strømmende toners væld
fra hende, som ejer den rige,
blomstrende barnesjæl.

Of still greater significance is a passage from *En Livsvår* (1858), *Folkeudgave*, Vol. X, p. 530:

> Jeg har mod til en dyst mod verdens ve;
> den har lænket mig længe nok.
> Nu vil jeg juble, nu vil jeg le
> mellem vårens vingede flok!
>
> Elegiske rimblomster ånded jeg frem
> på rudens isnende glas;
> en hjertestråle fra lysets hjem
> har nu dødet den klamme stas.

The first two lines of the latter stanza refer directly to *I Billedgalleriet* XXIII, 3.

Ibsen's married life was extremely happy. This was particularly fortunate; for often in the trying years that followed its beginning—and indeed as late as the spring of 1866, when the publication of *Brand* marked him as the mightiest poet of the age,—he needed all the encouragement and inspiration that his wife could bring him; for the demon of doubt assailed him anew. This period brought the realization of that *frigørelsestrang* to which he had already given utterance in our cycle (XV, 1 and ff.):

> Det er mig for lummert i dalens dyb,
> i stuen det er mig for trangt;
> ak, havde jeg vinger, jeg fløj afsted,
> jeg ved ikke selv hvorlangt!

In *På Vidderne*[3] he has told the story of his emancipation from the valley, his mounting upward onto the heights, and his struggle to

[3] Why did not Ibsen finish the poem *En Livsvår*? It may be that he found it impossible to sustain the burst of joy with which he speaks in I and II, and that he therefore broke off in III—

> Se, som tusend sejersfaner
> i et havbliks ro
> står de unge smekre graner
> over hej og mo.
>
> Under dem går vejen fremad
> ligegodt hvorhen—
> ligegodt, når kun ej hjemad.—

to write a poem in an entirely different mood—the magnificent *På Vidderne*.

maintain himself upon them. In 1862 he published *Kærlighedens Komedie* and *Forviklinger*, the latter being a succession of tableaux conceived in the setting of *I Billedgalleriet* XXIII, 1, but developed with a more attractive pessimism. In 1863 he published *Lysræd*, an improved form of *I Billedgalleriet* XIV, and this is the first of the themes of our cycle to emerge as a separate poem. It can hardly be otherwise than that it reflects the poet's feeling at this time, and that he actually dreaded the dawn of day.

LYSRÆD—1863

In the final redaction (1871) the parts italicized were changed as indicated in the parentheses following:

Dengang (Den tid) jeg gik i skolen
var mod nok i mit sind,—
at sige, så længe til solen
gik under bag bergets tind.

Men *sænkte* (lagde) sig nattens skygge
udover ås og myr,
da *gæsted* (skræmte) mig spøgelser stygge
fra sagn og fra eventyr.

Og *hvis* (bare) jeg lukked øjet,
da drømte jeg så mangt,
(jeg drømte så meget og mangt,—)
og alt mit mod var fløjet—
Gud vide må hvor langt.

Nu er der en forandring
med alting i mit sind;
nu går mit mod på vandring
ved morgensolens skin.

Nu er det dagens trolde,
nu er det livets larm,
som drysser alle de kolde
rædsler i min barm.

Jeg gemmer mig under fligen
af *nattens* (mørkets) skræmsels-sløjr;
da *vågner* (ruster sig) al min higen
så ørnedjerv som før.

Da trodser jeg hav og flammer;
jeg sejler som falk i sky,
jeg glemmer angst og jammer—
til næste morgengry.

Men fattes mig nattens foerværk,
jeg ved ej mit arme råd;—
ja, øver jeg engang et storværk,
så blir det en mørkets dåd.

It is erroneous to hold that *Lysræd* was originally a separate poem that was reworked to make *I Billedgalleriet* XIV, a view put forth by Woerner, *Henrik Ibsen*, I, p. 399, n. to p. 330.

That Ibsen was still receiving visits from his *svartalf* is shown by his creating in this year (1863) the character Skule in *Kongsemnerne*.

The *svartalf* still visited Ibsen during the first year of his life in Italy, but in the middle of July 1865 his sway began to come to an end. Ibsen has told the story in his letter of September 12, 1865, written to Bjørnson from Ariccia (*Breve* I, p. 97):

Alting er nu godt og vel, og i grunden har det været så hele tiden med undtagelse af de enkelte tider, da jeg ikke vidste, hvor jeg skulde hen i nogen henseende, ikke med hensyn til penge alene, men fordi det ikke vilde gå med mit arbejde. Så gik jeg en dag i Peterskirken—jeg var et ærinde i Rom—og der gik der med en gang op for mig en stærk og klar form for hvad jeg havde at sige.

Nu har jeg kastet overbord hvad jeg i et år har pint mig med uden at komme nogen vej, og i midten af Juli begyndte jeg på noget nyt, der gik frem således som endnu aldrig noget er gået frem for mig.

Ibsen has elsewhere told us what he saw in the depths of Correggio's *Night* at the Dresden gallery thirteen years before (VI, see p. 130 above). What he saw in the mighty surroundings of St. Peter's was only a larger experience; he was lifted out of and above himself, and as before he might have said:

Min frygt er kuet og min tvivl er vegen,
den skønne myte er til sandhed vorden!

For out of that vision he wrote the dramatic *Brand*. Had *Brand* been published, as Ibsen had hoped, in time to be put on the market for the Christmas book-trade 1865, he would in all human probability have received no further visits from his *svartalf*, but unfortunately the poem was not published until

March 1866, and during the intervening period the poet, worn with waiting, fell desperately sick. From Rome on March 4 he wrote to Bjørnson (*Breve* I, p. 109):

Kære Bjørnson, jeg synes, at jeg ligesom ved et stort uendeligt øde er skilt fra både Gud og mennesker; isommer da jeg digted mit stykke, var jeg midt under nøden og pinagtigheden så ubeskrivelig lykkelig, jeg følte en korstogsjubel i mig, jeg ved ikke den ting jeg skulde manglet mod til at gå imøde; men der er intet så slappende og udhulende som denne trøstesløse venten.

In these depths of the poet's despair the *svartalf* visited him for the last time on record and Ibsen recurred to the theme of *I Billedgalleriet* I, and on it wrote the lines *Stambogsrim*, lines that are to be regarded as addressed to his muse:

Jeg kaldte dig mit lykkebud;
jeg kaldte dig min stjerne.
Du blev da også, sandt for Gud,
et lykkebud, der gik—gik ud;—
en stjerne—, ja, et stjerneskud,
der slukned i det fjerne.

Nevertheless Ibsen felt that in *Brand* he had created a great work, and in his normal mind he realized that it was bound to be appreciated. His real fear was that the light of his genius would suddenly be snuffed out and forever quenched in oblivion before he had realized the goal of completely expressing himself.[4] Accordingly some time before *Stambogsrim* he took up the theme of *I Billedgalleriet* III and on it wrote *En Svane* (a poem that did not receive its final revision, however, until the winter of 1870-71):

Min hvide svane,
du stumme, du stille;
hverken slag eller trille
lod sangrøst ane.

Angst beskyttende
alfen, som sover,—
altid lyttende,
gled du henover.

Men sidste mødet,
da eder og øjne
var lønlige løgne,—
ja da, da lød det!

[4]Bergsøe relates (*Henrik Ibsen på Ischia*, p. 164) that Ibsen was obsessed with such a fear while staying at Casamicciola, Ischia, in 1867. He can hardly have had this fear to a lesser extent while he was despairingly waiting for the publication of *Brand*.

I toners føden
du slutted din bane.
Du sang i døden;—
du var dog en svane!

To a considerable extent, therefore, the poem is one of symbolical self-portraiture. It should be contrasted with his earlier poem, *Svanen* (see *ES.* I, pp. 57-8), written under the influence of Munch.

After having scored his triumph with *Brand*, Ibsen's confidence in himself was never shaken; indeed it became what may fairly be called sublime. In his petition to King Carl (April 15, 1866, *Breve* I, p. 114f.) he says:

Det er ikke for et sorgfrit udkomme jeg her kæmper, men for den livsgerning, som jeg uryggelig tror og ved, at Gud har lagt på mig,—

* * * * * * * * * *

Det hviler i Deres Majestæts kongelige hånd, om jeg skal måtte tie og bøje mig under den bittreste forsagelse, som kan ramme et menneskes sjæl,—den forsagelse, at måtte slippe sin gerning i livet, at vige der, hvor jeg ved, at det er givet mig åndens våben til at kæmpe; og dette er for mig tifold tungt; thi jeg har indtil denne dag aldrig veget.

In reviewing *Peer Gynt*[5] in November 1867, Clemens Petersen, the Danish critic, constituted himself successor to the *svartalf*. This review brought forth the famous words of Ibsen (in the letter to Bjørnson, December 9, 1867, *Breve* I, p. 159):

Min bog *er* poesi; og er den ikke, så skal den blive det. Begrebet *poesi* skal i vort land, i Norge, komme og bøje sig efter bogen.

When Ibsen in the autumn of 1868, now secure in his fame, settled in Dresden, the memories of his former visit came vividly back. The young woman whom he had observed, in the full bloom of her youth, sitting and copying Murillo's "Madonna," and in whose mouth he had put poems XIII-XVII and voiced his own disappointed ambition, was sitting there still. But her beauty had faded and her hair turned gray, and, saddest of all,

[5] It is possible that in his splendid description of the shipwreck at the beginning of *Peer Gynt*, act V, Ibsen was carrying out his intention implied in *I Billedgalleriet* XVII, 4—

Jeg ridser med blyant et vrag i storm
mellem rullende havsensvover;
ifald jeg var digter, jeg ridsed med pen
en lyrisk skitse derover.

in contrast to Ibsen, who had now gained success, she was evidently as much a failure as ever. It is this that makes his poem *I Galleriet*, which is a sequel to *I Billedgalleriet*, so touchingly pathetic:

Som dejlig kvinde
ved staffeliet,
hun sad derinde
i galleriet.

Hvilke Kastaler
drikker hun mon af—
hun eftermaler
Murillos Madonna.

Men øjes svømmende
langsyn siger,
hun bygger drømmende
skønheds-riger—.

Atten år senere
kom jeg tilbage,
hilste de renere
gamle dage.

Som falmet kvinde,
ved staffeliet,
hun sad derinde
i galleriet.

Men hvad er dette?
Det samme spil jo!
Den samme nette
kopi af Murillo.

Hun sidder og virker,
og livet frister
med pynt for kirker
og stas for turister.

Og så har hun siddet
i alle årene,
og længslen spiddet,
og bleget hårene.

Men øjes svømmende
langsyn siger:
hun bygger drømmende
skønheds-riger.

The dramatic date of the latter part of this poem is shown by "atten år", line 13, to be 1870; it is one of the last poems written by Ibsen before completing his collection in the winter of 1870-71.

There still remain two themes that developed into separate poems—*Kløften* based upon *I Billedgalleriet* II,1—III,1, and *Min unge Vin* based on XXI, 2-4 and bearing the traditional date of ca. 1856. As Ibsen never made his poems less good by reworking them, the absurdity of making *Min unge Vin* antedate *I Billedgalleriet* XXI (a view put forth, e. g., by Woerner, *Henrik Ibsen*, I, p. 399, n. to p. 332) becomes evident. It is far more reasonable with Koht and Elias (*ES.* III, p. 393) to interpret its traditional date as referring to that of the sonnet on which it is based. In my second paper I shall point out (p. 160) that both *Kløften* and *Min unge Vin* owe their final form to the winter months 1870-71—a fact of no little consequence in their interpretation. First let me cite—

MIN UNGE VIN

Du kaldte d i g min unge vin,
m i g karret løvomkranset.
Du dufted sød, du perled fin,
du gæred hed, og du var min;—
da blev processen stanset.

Min vin blev stjålen af en fløs;
men karret bærmen aver.
Jeg skal ej knalde dig af døs,
jeg eksploderer ej, min tøs,—
jeg falder blot i staver.

To interpret the wine of youth as the wine of love, and its effusion as the loss of the beloved (Rikke Holst, for example) would be as erroneous as to give a literal interpretation to the lost loves in *Spillemænd* and *På Vidderne*. Symbolism must, therefore, be resorted to. In the original sonnet "den ædle druesaft" clearly refers to the wine of poetic inspiration. Can "min unge vin" refer to anything else? It may be noted that in MS *b* the sketch of *Min unge Vin* (title not given) precedes that of *Et Stambogs-vers*, which, as pointed out above, is addressed to the poetic muse. If, as seems certain, *Min unge Vin* was written in the winter of 1870-71, the probability that *min tøs* (line 9) refers to the muse of poetry is still further strengthened; and when he addresses her in line 8—

Jeg skal ej knalde dig af døs,

he may be announcing his transition to prose form, and that the period of his writing in verse was run out, as indeed it practically was. It is interesting to observe that a few months previously in his letter to Peter Hansen (October 28, 1870, see *Breve* I, p. 215) he said: "Kan jeg ikke, omtrent som Christoff i *Jakob v. Tyboe*, pege på *Brand* og *Peer Gynt* og sige: 'se, dette er en *vin*rus'? Og er der ikke i *De Unges Forbund* noget som minder om Knackwurst og Bier?"

The most interesting, as well as the most significant of the poems built on a theme of *I Billedgalleriet* is

KLØFTEN

Tungt trak det op; en regnsky brast,
og kløften blev en elv i hast.

Og alt som uvejrs-flommen steg,
den bobled, bruste, sang og skreg.

Det trak forbi; det lufted væk,
og elven skrumped ind til bæk.

Der hvisled dråbers regnbu-støv;
der rasled perler over løv.

En vakker hundedag—som før
lå kløftens grusbund atter tør.

Men klangen blev; der hvisled støv,
der knirked kvas, der rasled løv.

Det minded fjernt om kildevæld.
Jeg selv har sværmet der en kveld.

Its interpretation is, therefore, correspondingly important. The following explanations deserve to be noted:

1. Woerner, *Henrik Ibsen* I, p. 337: "Feiner ist die falsche Romantik[6] nie abgethan worden."

2. Koht and Elias, *ES.* I, p. LXVII, would seem from their quotation of the last line to interpret the poem as referring to the poet's awakening from the delusive dreams of the false national romanticism, an awakening that was brought about by the failure of his countrymen to keep their pledges to come to the rescue of their Danish brethren in the desperate struggle against Germany

[6]Ibsen's attitude toward the romanticism of the early fifties has been brought out by Sturtevant in his discussion of Ibsen's "Sankthansnatten", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. XIV, July 1915.

in 1863-64. These critics would put the poem in the same general category with *Till de Medskyldige* "To the Comrades in Guilt," the introduction to the "epic" *Brand*, written in 1864 or early in 1865—the traditional date of *Kløften*.

3. John Paulsen in his *Samliv med Ibsen* [1913] pp. 171-2 (cf. also *Samliv med Ibsen* [1906] pp. 74-5), holds that the poem was built on a thought of Goethe occurring in his *Conversations* with Eckermann of April 15, 1829:- "Das Verführerische für junge Leute," sagte Goethe, "ist dieses. Wir leben in einer Zeit, wo so viele Cultur verbreitet ist, dass sie sich gleichsam der Atmosphäre mitgetheilt hat, worin ein junger Mensch athmet. Poetische und philosophische Gedanken leben und regen sich in ihm, mit der Luft seiner Umgebung hat er sie eingesogen, aber er denkt, sie wären sein Eigenthum, und so spricht er sie als das Seinige aus. Nachdem er aber der Zeit wiedergegeben hat, was er von ihr empfangen, ist er arm. Er gleicht einer Quelle, die von zugetragenem Wasser eine Weile gesprudelt hat, und die aufhört zu rieseln, sobald der erborgte Vorrath erschöpft ist."

All of these interpretations are illuminating. As to (3) Ibsen saw the tendencies described in *Kløften*, and in that part of *I Billedgalleriet* on which it is based, abundantly illustrated in the literary life of Norway in the decade of the fifties, and this may show that the influence of Goethe should not be regarded in as vital a light as was done by Paulsen. The interpretation of Koht and Elias (2) might in general be supported by Ibsen's own words written in 1851 in his review of Jensen's *Huldrens Hjem* (see *Samlede Værker*, Folkeudgave Vol. X, p. 333): "Den nationale forfatter er den, der forstår at meddele sit værk hin grundtone, der klinger os imøde fra fjeld og dal, fra li og strand, men fremfor alt fra vort eget indre." The fact that the poem was not written, or at least not finished, until the winter of 1870-71, and that it was built on the thought of *I Billedgalleriet* II,1—III, 1 raises the question whether this interpretation is not after all too narrow. No interpretation of the poem must leave out its origin in Ibsen himself, the passage in *I Billedgalleriet* in which the *svartalf* whispers into his ear his poetic shortcomings, see above p. 139. As Ibsen's poetic power grew, and with it his poetic consciousness, he began to see that the whisperings of the *svartalf* had not been altogether unjust, but that, brutal though they were, they had helped his poetic development. The keynote of *Kløften* is confidence; and in 1871 the poet, his doubts banished and his reputation secure, could placidly look back over his career and say—

Jeg selv har sværmet der en kveld.

II

THE CHRONOLOGY AND COMPOSITION OF THE DIGTE

Ibsen's *Digte*, as published in their first edition in May, 1871, comprised a collection of fifty-five poems arranged in the order indicated by the column to the left in the table below. This order, which was of the poet's own choosing, was not strictly chronological. The original list of fifty-five remained intact in all the later editions published in the poet's lifetime, the only changes being additions to the list, and there were no changes or insertions within it (except that in the Folkeudgave *Til min Forlægger* was inserted between *Ved Port Said* 51 and *Ballonbrev* 52). In the Mindeudgave of 1906-07 a chronological arrangement was adopted as indicated below in the column to the right. The reason for this new order is thus set forth by the editor Joh. Storm in Vol. V, Appendix p. 4:

"Den kronologiske orden gennemføres, efter forfatterens og hans families ønske, ikke alene i dramaerne, men også i digtene. Dramaerne ordnes nu som før, efter trykåret. Digtene blev ordnede, så godt det lod sig gøre, efter J. B. Halvorsens bibliografiske oplysninger; hvor affattelsestiden var bekendt, blev denne lagt til grund; ellers trykåret. Også denne ordning har sine ulemper; men fordelene er overvejende ved det lys den kaster over digterens udvikling."

The grounds for such change may well be examined. Is it not strange that the poet followed one arrangement of his poems during his lifetime, and desired another to be followed after his death? If his own wishes for such a rearrangement were indubitably known, why were also the members of his family consulted? Their wishes would have been unnecessary if to confirm, and should have been unavailing if to set aside the poet's own wishes. If he desired the chronological order to be adopted, why did he not furnish the full information on which this was to be based? Did he signify this wish at some time during his last years when his mind had become impaired? Is not the following interpretation more likely to be correct: that Ibsen desired as a general principle the chronological order to be carried through as to the *larger units* of his works, but that the *Digte* comprising both those published in 1871 as well as the later additions thereto should be put in as of the year 1871, i. e., between *De Unges Forbund* (1869) and *Kejser og Galilæer* (1873)?

The advantages claimed for the new order are that it sheds light on the poet's development. While it may be frankly admitted that this is true in regard to a large number of the poems, it ought also to be pointed out that there are several of the very important poems in regard to which it is not true. For Ibsen was an inveterate reviser of his poems up to the time that they were published in the edition of 1871. He not only improved their diction, but made excisions, additions, condensed, expanded and, most important of all, introduced changes of thought and of viewpoint that came only with richer experience and poetic growth.

IBSEN'S *DIGTE*

1871 (first edition)		1907 (memorial edition)	
Spillemænd	2	*På Akershus*, 1851	6
Kong Håkons gildehal	10	*Spillemænd*, 1851	1
Byggeplaner	11	*Ederfuglen*, 1851	7
Markblomster og potteplanter	12	*Bergmanden*, 1851	10
En fuglevise	13	*Stormsvalen*, 185–†	28
På Akershus	1	*Fugl og fuglefænger*, 185–	9
Ederfuglen	3	*Lysræd*, ca. 1855	12
Med en vandlilje	31	*Min unge vin*, ca. 1856†	11
Fugl og fuglefænger	6	*Ørnulfs drapa*, 1857*	34
Bergmanden	4	*Kong Håkons gildehal*, 1858	2
Min unge vin†	8	*Byggeplaner*, 1858	3
Lysræd	7	*Markblomster og potteplanter*, 1858	4
*Digterens vise**	21	*En fuglevise*, 1858	5
Kløften†	40	*Skolehuset*, 1858	20
Højfjeldsliv	19	*Priset være kvinden!* 1859	18
På sangertog	33	*4de Juli, 1859*	19
En svane†	43	*Folkesorg*, 1859	21
Priset være kvinden!	15	*Åbent brev*, 1859	32
4de Juli, 1859	16	*Højfjeldsliv*, 1859	15
Skolehuset	14	*På vidderne*, 1859-60	45
Folkesorg	17	*Digterens vise*, 1860*	13
Til thingmændene	23	*Til professor Schweigård*, 1860	25
Hilsen til Svenskerne	24	*Til thingmændene*, 1860	22
Til de genlevende	25	*Hilsen til Svenskerne*, 1860	23
Til professor Schweigård	22	*Til de genlevende*, 1860	24
*Vuggevise**	29	*Terje Vigen*, 1860	39
Borte!†	38	*Storthings-gården*, 1861	38
Stormsvalen†	5	*Forviklinger*, 1862	40
*Agnes**	41	*Vuggevise*, 1863*	26
Stambogsrim†	47	*Kvindernes bøn*, 1863*	46
Mindets magt†	39	*Med en vandlilje*, 1863	8
Åbent brev	18	*Til en bortdragende kunstner*, 1863	33

	Til en bortdragende kunstner	32		*På sangertog*, 1863	16
	*Ørnulfs drapa**	9		*En broder i nød*! 1863	36
35	*Fredrik den syvendes minde*	35	35	*Frederik den syvendes minde*, 1864	35
	En broder i nød!	34		*Troens grund*, 1864†	37
	Troens grund†	36		*Fra mit husliv*, 1864†	41
	Storthings-gården	27		*Borte*! 1864†	27
	Terje Vigen	26		*Mindets magt*, ca. 1864†	31
40	*Forviklinger*	28	40	*Kløften*, ca. 1864-65†	14
	Fra mit huslivt	37		*Agnes*, 1865*	29
	En kirke†	44		*De usynliges kor*, 1865*	44
	I galleriet†	48		*En svane*, ca. 1865†	17
	*De usynliges kor**	42		*En kirke*, ca. 1865†	42
45	*På vidderne*	20	45	*Abraham Lincolns mord*, 1865	48
	*Kvindernes bøn**	30		*I en komponists stambog*, 1866	54
	Tak†	53		*Stambogsrim*, ca. 1866†	30
	Abraham Lincolns mord	45		*I galleriet*, 1868-69†	43
	Til min ven revolutions-taleren†	49		*Til min ven revolutions-taleren*, 1869†	49
50	*Uden navn*†	50	50	*Uden navn*, 1869†	50
	Ved Port Said†	51		*Ved Port Said*, 1869†	51
			51a	*Til min forlægger* 1870†	
52	*Ballonbrev*	52		*Ballonbrev*, 1870	52
	Rimbrev til fru Heiberg†	54		*Tak*, ca. 1870†	47
	I en komponists stambog	46		*Rimbrev til fru Heiberg*, 1871†	53
55	*Brændte skibe*†	55	55	*Brændte skibe*, 1871†	55

Before explaining the peculiar difficulties that must be met with by anyone who attempts to group the poems of Ibsen chronologically, I beg to distinguish, on the basis of their provenience, three classes among the fifty-five poems taken up into the edition of 1871:

I. Thirty-two poems that had previously been given to the public through periodicals or newspapers or festival programs for which they had been written.

II. Six poems that had been taken out of the context in the larger works of which they were a part, marked * in my lists.

III. Seventeen poems that had not previously been published, marked † in my lists.

It may be noted that according to Storm's principle of arrangement *Fugl og Fuglefænger* should have been put in second place in his collection, in as much as it was originally published in *Andhrimner*, February 16, 1851, which would thus entitle it to be placed between *På Akershus* and *Spillemænd*.

The following additions were made later:

56. *Sanger-hilsen til Sverig*	56. *Ved tusendårs-festen*, 1872
57. *Langt borte*	57. *Nordens signaler*, 1872
58. *Et rimbrev*	58. *Ved et bryllup*, 1874
59. *Ved tusendårs-festen*	59. *Et rimbrev*, 1875
60. *Et vers*	60. *Langt borte*, 1875
61. *Stjerner i lyståge*	61. *Sanger-hilsen til Sverig*, 1875
62. *De sad der, de to-*	62. *Et vers*, 1878
	63. *Stjerner i lyståge*, 1886
	64. *De sad der, de to-*, 1892

In the Mindeudgave numbers 57 and 58 are new additions.

Class I

Of the thirty-two poems comprising this class only three were written after Ibsen left Norway in the spring of 1864, *Abraham Lincolns Mord*, *I en Komponists Stambog*, *Ballonbrev*, the remaining twenty-nine ranging from 1851 up to the latter date. The only poem in this class to be taken up into the edition of 1871 unaltered was the sculpturally perfect *På Vidderne*, which in spite of its not inconsiderable length was taken up without any change whatever except that of orthography. In many of the remaining thirty-one the changes introduced were slight, but in some cases the changes were considerable, at times so considerable as practically to produce a new poem. Obviously to cite the revised form of 1871 as of the earlier year in which a poem was separately published is not illuminating but misleading as to the poet's development. In illustration of this may I cite the following poems: *På Akershus*, *Spillemænd*, *Ederfuglen*, *Bergmanden* all assigned to 1851; *Lysræd* ca. 1855; *Byggeplaner* 1858; *Til de Genlevende* (*Ved J. L. Heibergs Død*), 1860.

På Akershus, as originally published in *Andhrimner*, January 19, 1851, consisted of thirteen stanzas; in the revision of 1871 the poem was expanded to sixteen stanzas; the original form printed in *Efterladte Skrifter* I, p. 59 f.

Spillemænd, in its original form as the tailor's song in *En Løverdagsaften i Hardanger*, was published in *Andhrimner*, April 6 and 20, 1851 (see *ES.* I, p. 71 f.), where it consisted of nine stanzas; condensed to four stanzas in 1871. In Indhold I (see *ES.* III, p. 385) made up early in the winter of 1870-71 Ibsen cites the poem by the opening line of the original version *I gamle dage sad jeg*,

but in the next table of contents (Indhold II) it emerges as *Spillemænd*. The internal evidence of the last stanza—

I store kirker og sale
mig selv jeg spilled ind,
og fossens gru og sange
veg aldrig fra mit sind.

presupposes the poet's securely established fame; for he could hardly have spoken thus long before 1871.

Ederfuglen, as originally published in *Andhrimner*, April 27, 1851, consisted of eight four-line stanzas (see *ES.* I, p. 74 f.), a form which was reduced to seven couplets in 1871. The last two couplets—

Men røves hans tredje, hans sidste skat,—
da spiler han vinger en forårs-nat.

Da kløver han skodden med blodigt bryst;—
mod syd, mod syd til en solskins-kyst!

are a reflection of Ibsen's own experience in leaving Norway, his speech of 1874 to the students notwithstanding.

Bergmanden, as originally published in *Andhrimner*, June 1, 1851, contained one stanza more than the version of 1871, this stanza coming between our stanzas six and seven. Besides this change the poem underwent a great many changes of diction that mightily improved and strengthened it, as a comparison of the redactions reprinted herewith shows, the orthography and punctuation having been modernized. In the redaction of 1851 italics indicate places altered for 1863, and passages italicized in the version of 1863 indicate passages changed for 1871, the changes introduced being given in parentheses.

BERGMANDEN

1851	1863 (1871)
Klippe, brist med larm og brag	Bergvæg, brist med *larm* (drøn) og brag
for mit tunge hammerslag!	for mit tunge hammerslag!
Nedad må jeg vejen bane	Nedad må jeg vejen *bane* (bryde)
mod det mål, jeg kun tør ane.	*mod det mål, jeg kun tør ane.*
	(til jeg hører malmen lyde.)
Dybt i fjeldets stille nat	Dybt i fjeldets *stille* (øde) nat
vinker mig den rige skat,—	vinker mig den rige skat,—
diamant og ædelstene	diamant og ædelstene
mellem guldets lyse grene.	mellem guldets *lyse* (røde) grene.
Hist i dybet er der fred,—	Og i dybet er der fred,—
fred og nat fra evighed;—	fred og *nat* (ørk) fra evighed;—

ban mig vejen, tunge hammer, til naturens hjertekammer!	bryd mig vejen, tunge hammer, til *naturens* (det dulgtes) hjertekammer!
Engang sad som *barn* jeg glad under himlens stjernerad, *sad på* vårens blomster*leje*, havde himlens fred i eje.	Engang sad som gut jeg glad under himlens stjernerad, trådte vårens blomsterveje, havde *himlens fred* (barnefred) i eje.
Men jeg glemte vårens pragt i den midnats*dunkle* schakt, glemte fuglens glade sange dybt i *fjeldets hvalte* gange.	Men jeg glemte *vårens* (dagens) pragt i den midnatsmørke schakt, glemte *fuglens glade* (liens sus og) sange *dybt i grubens* (i min grubes) tempelgange.
Dengang jeg først *tren* herind, tænkte jeg med barnligt sind: dybets ånder *skulle* råde *for mig livets store* gåde.	Dengang *jeg først* (først jeg) steg herind, tænkte jeg med *barnligt* (skyldfrit) sind: dybets ånder skal mig råde livets endeløse gåde.—
De skal lære mig hvordan blomsterknoppen spire kan, hvorfor hejens fagre blommer sygne hen når høsten kommer.	
End har ingen ånd mig lært, hvad mig tykkedes så sært: end er ingen stråle runden, som *belyser det* fra grunden.	End har ingen ånd mig lært. hvad mig tykkedes så sært; end er ingen stråle runden, som kan lyse op fra grunden.
Har jeg fejlet? Fører ej *da* til klarhed denne vej? Lyset *blænder* jo mit øje, hvis jeg søger i det høje.	Har jeg fejlet? Fører ej frem til klarhed denne vej? Lyset blinder jo mit øje, hvis jeg søger i det høje.
Nej, i dybet må jeg ned; der er fred fra evighed. *Ban* mig vejen, tunge hammer, til naturens hjertekammer!	Nej, i dybet må jeg ned; der er fred fra evighed. Bryd mig vejen, tunge hammer, til *naturens* (det dulgtes) hjertekammer.
Sådan går det slag i slag, *til han segner træt og svag.* Ingen morgenstråle skinner; ingen *klarheds* sol oprinder.	Hammerslag på hammerslag indtil livets sidste dag. Ingen morgenstråle skinner; ingen håbets sol oprinder.

When, therefore, we pick up the Mindeudgave and read these poems as of the year 1851, we lose ourselves in wonderment that

a youth of twenty-three could have written them. Then it is realized that no youth of twenty-three ever could write such poems, not even Ibsen at that age.

Lysræd, said to have been written about 1855. This must refer to the form in which it appears in the poetic cycle *I Billedgalleriet* XIV, a collection published in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, September 18 and 25, 1859, *Lysræd* being found in the latter issue. The form in which the poem was published in 1871 shows a thorough revision of the diction and the addition of the last stanza. An intermediate version had been published in the same periodical February 8, 1863 (see above pp. 144-5).

Byggeplaner, in the form published in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, March 14, 1858, contained four stanzas (see *ES*. I, p. 151). In the redaction of 1871 the first stanza showed changes in diction, the second disappeared, while the third and fourth—

> Et drømmeslot jeg bygged; det gik lystigt og fort,
> jeg satte mig to formål, et lidet og et stort;
> det store var at blive en udødelig mand,
> det lille var at eje en dejlig liljevand.
>
> Mig syntes at i planen var en herlig harmoni,
> men siden er der kommen forstyrrelse deri;
> alt som jeg blev fornuftig, blev det hele splittergalt:
> det store blev så lidet, det lille blev mig alt.

became respectively the second and third with the thought changed as follows:

> "Et skyslot vil jeg bygge. Det skal lyse over Nord.
> To fløje skal der være; en liden og en stor.
> Den store skal huse en udødelig skald;
> den lille skal tjene et pigebarn til hal.—"
>
> Mig syntes at i planen var en herlig harmoni;
> men siden er der kommet forstyrrelse deri.
> Da mester blev fornuftig, blev slottet splittergalt:
> storfløjen blev for liden, den lille fløj forfaldt.

It is to be noted that the year in which the original version was published (1858) was the year of his marriage.

Til de Genlevende. The original form written on the occasion of the death of J. L. Heiberg and entitled *Ved J. L. Heibergs Død* comprised twenty-six couplets and was published in *Morgenbladet*, September 7, 1860 (see *ES*. I, p. 180 f.). This was effectively condensed to six couplets in the edition of 1871.

Class III

In the same way that many of the poems of Class I are seen to contain thoughts and changes that reveal the Ibsen of 1871 rather than of the earlier date to which they are assigned, just so, many of the poems of Class III can be shown to owe their composition or at least their published form to a period beginning not earlier than the spring of 1870 or perhaps even the winter of 1870-71 rather than to the earlier date to which they are assigned.

At the request of several of his friends, and apparently also at the invitation of his publisher, Ibsen, in January 1870, had decided to prepare for publication a volume of *Digte* (see *Breve* I, p. 195). Professor Løkke had volunteered to procure for the poet copies of the poems previously published, but it was not until Christmas time 1870 that Ibsen then in Dresden received these transcriptions in a MS designated *a* by Koht and Elias. The corrections in this MS are by Ibsen's own hand, and date from the winter months of 1870-71. MSS *b* and *c* belong to the same general period as *a*, and are especially important as containing between them sketches or drafts of all the poems of Class III except *Brændte Skibe*, as well as of some of the other poems, notably of *Ballonbrev*, which would be put in Class III except for the accident of its having been separately published in January 1871. MSS *b* and *c* conform essentially to the rules of orthography adopted by the congress of Stockholm in the summer of 1869, which were first adopted by Ibsen in the second edition of *Kongsemnerne* in the spring of 1870, (see *Breve* 63 and 65, I, pp. 196 and 198) and note to the latter. MSS *b* and *c* contain, respectively, Indhold II and Indhold I, which are so significant in showing the formation of the collection, and also in furnishing what seem reliable data as to the time when certain poems of Class III, as, e. g., *Kløften* and *Min unge Vin*, were recast (see *ES.* III, pp. 383 f.).

In as much as Ibsen was not in a position to revise and select his poems of Class I until after he had received the MS from Professor Løkke at about Christmas time 1870, it would be expected that in the intervening twelvemonth he would have had sufficient time to put his new poems in their final form. This, however, he

does not seem to have done except to a very limited extent; for the only additions he made in MS *a* are the titles—

Tilbagekomst; alle tanker var tænkte festen var inde.
Skorpionen.
Munken på Epomeo.
Ved Port Said.

and of these only the last has been preserved and found a place in the edition. In Indhold I (see *ES.* III, pp. 384-5) the only titles of new poems added are—

Lincolns mord.
Ballonbrev.
Jeg og min skorpion

Indhold I was made up after he received the MS from Professor Løkke.

In Indhold II, which was made up still later, the following new titles are added—

Stormsvalen.
Min unge vin. (Note below)
Fra Dybbøldagene [*Troens grund*].
Kløften. (Note below)
En svane.
Stambogsrim.
I en ung komponists stambog.

Indhold III contains the following new titles—

Fra mit husliv.
Bortel
Mindets magt.
I galleriet.
Til min ven revolutions-taleren.
Martyrdom (earlier title for *Uden navn*).

NOTE—Indhold I contained from *I Billedgalleriet* eight first line titles (II, III, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, including the following—

Dit indre er som bakkehældets bæk. (II)
O (sic), bild for alting ej dig ind at flommen, (III)

which were reworked as *Kløften*, dated traditionally ca. 1864-65, and

Sejl med forstand; thi digtersnekken krænger, (XXI)

which was reworked as *Min unge Vin*, traditionally dated ca. 1856. The fact that both *Kløften* and *Min unge Vin* are far superior to the sonnets on which they are severally based renders it improbable that Ibsen would have considered the sonnets as worthy of a place in Indhold I, if at the time of its making up the composition of *Kløften* and *Min unge Vin* had progressed far. These poems therefore seem to have been finished at about New Year's 1871, and the date 1856 assigned to *Min unge Vin* would refer to the time of composition of sonnet XXI.

Indhold IV contains the following new titles—

En kirke.
Ved Port Said.
Tak!
Brændte skibe.

Indhold V (=that of the first edition) completes the collection by adding—

Rimbrev til fru Heiberg.

To me it seems absolutely certain that this was the last poem of the original collection to be written.

In his letter to Brandes of February 17, 1871 (see *Breve* I, p. 225) Ibsen says: "Med udgivelsen af min digtsamling har jeg næsten nat og dag været beskæftiget siden jul. Det har været et forbandet stykke arbejde at skulle gennemgå al den mængde standpunkter, hvormed jeg forlængst var færdig. Tilsammen danner de dog noget helt." It is hardly likely that the poet could have been kept so busy merely with the revising of the poems of Class I.

That the poems of Class III have in them much of the Ibsen of 1870-71, even when they are assigned to a very much earlier date, has been rendered probable by the examination of the external evidence presented above. This view is confirmed by examining the poems themselves from within. Of course, it is hardly to be expected that each poem would contain such clear evidence, but the following may be cited as bearing out the main thesis:

Stormsvalen—"Omarbejdelse af en tidligere utrykt Text fra 50-aarene."—Halvorsen. The poem displays a fineness of finish and an assumption of authority of which Ibsen was hardly capable in the decade of the fifties. The concluding couplets, in which he compares the life of the storm-swallow to that of the poet,—

> For tung for luften, for let for bølgerne—;
> digterfugl, digterfugl,—der har vi følgerne!
>
> Ja, og hvad værst er,—i lærdes øjne
> gælder det meste for skipperløgne.

show the experienced poet, and Ibsen long hesitated on the thought of the first line of the last stanza (see *ES.* I, p. 499).

Borte is the most impressively simple of all of Ibsen's poems. The *fest* that serves as its main incident occurred at Genzano in the summer of 1864, and this is generally regarded as the year of its composition. The *gæst* was Thea Bruun, who served as

the poet's model for the character Agnes in *Brand* and who soon afterward returned to Norway where she died at the youthful age of twenty-four (see Paulsen, *Nye Erindringer* pp. 152-155). Ibsen can hardly have failed to have heard that she had passed away at the time that he was making up his edition of *Digte* in the winter of 1870-71, and so the last stanza—

> Det var en fest kun
> før natten den sorte;
> hun var en gæst kun,—
> og nu er hun borte.

may very well be of later composition than 1864 and owe its haunting power to its reflecting her all too early departure from this our mortal life.

Mindets Magt is built on the comparison of Ibsen to the bear who learned to dance to the music while chained in a glowing caldron. Ibsen's escape from the caldron would naturally be interpreted as referring to his leaving Norway in the spring of 1864, and this is the year to which the poem is traditionally assigned. In the four concluding couplets, however, his experience in the caldron is referred to as by no means of recent occurrence—

> Jeg selv sad engang i kedlen nede,
> under fuld musik og forsvarlig hede.
>
> Og dengang brændte jeg mer end skindet;
> og det går aldrig mig ud af mindet.
>
> Og hvergang genklang fra den tid lyder,
> det er som jeg bandtes i gloende gryder.
>
> Det kendes som stik under neglerødder;—
> da må jeg danse på versefødder.

and there is in them altogether too much of the retrospective to allow them to be dated from his early stay in Italy.

Kløften has above on external evidence been shown to owe its completed form to the winter of 1870-71. The last couplet—

> Det minded fjernt om kildevæld;
> jeg selv har sværmet der en kveld.

looks back across a wide expanse to a time before the poet had been converted away from the superficiality of romantic frenzy. The traditional date, ca. 1864-65, may refer to the time when this conversion became an accomplished fact.

I Galleriet, dated 1868-69 on the ground that the poet returned to Dresden in the fall of 1868 and that he immediately went to the gallery to refresh his memories of the earlier visit (1852). But the lines—

> Atten år senere
> kom jeg tilbage,
> hilste de renere
> gamle dage.

point to 1870 as the year of his return to the gallery and as the earliest time at which he could have written the poem.

The attempt of Storm to shed light on the poet's development through a chronological arrangement in which the revisions of 1870-71 are actually credited to the time when each poem was originally written or published has been shown above in a number of pertinent instances to be futile. In fairness, however, to Storm (and also to Halvorsen whose chronological data he generally followed) it ought at the same time to be stated that the dates assigned are not far from correct, if held to refer to the time of the *mood* or of the *incident* that served as the basis for each poem concerned. For in his letter to Peter Hansen of October 28, 1870 (*Breve* I, pp. 212-13) Ibsen said: "Alt, hvad jeg digterisk har frembragt, har havt sit udspring fra en stemning og en livssituation." Although Ibsen, in revising his poems to the extent that he did, may have been guilty of what Gosse calls "confusing the history of literature," it is not for the editor or the critic to fall in with this confusion, but rather to save the public from it.

For that very reason the poet may have avoided any semblance to the chronological order, and chosen rather like a skilful programmaker to place each poem in its most effective setting. Even granting that we could fix with absolute certainty the chronological sequence of every poem in the collection, nevertheless the poet's own arrangement ought to have been followed; for in it there are traces, as for example in the arrangement of the odes of Horace, of a very subtle and artistic plan. The details of this plan I shall state only for the two most significant positions in the collection—the introductory and the concluding poem. What poem is so admirably adapted to opening the collection as *Spillemænd*? Four exquisitely chiseled stanzas—the atmosphere of a twilight summer's eve, the poet's hope of winning his beloved through the spell of his song, his loss of the beloved while attaining to the mas-

tery over song, and the searchlight that he casts on his career as he passes down the long aisle to success—alone. *Spillemænd* is *På Vidderne* in miniature. What more haunting poem could have been chosen to close the collection than *Brændte Skibe*, in which the thoughts of the poet in exile, like the blue smoke from his burning ships, build a span northward to the homeland? And the effect was not spoiled in subsequent editions when the concluding position through additions made to the original collection passed to *Et Vers* and still later to *De sad der, de to*—. In view of such considerations it may be hoped that future editors may return to the arrangement that seems to have embodied the poet's wishes during the best years of his life.

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